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PRESS RELEASE

BUILDING A WORLD MARKET – ON INTUITION

BÖRJE MALEUS AND BENGT WAHLQVIST ARE NEW SWEDISH COMMERCE PERSONIFIED. THEY RUN CTEK IN VIKMANSHYTTAN, A LITTLE INNOVATIVE AND QUICKLY GROWING COMPANY THAT WITHIN THE SPACE OF A FEW YEARS BUILT A WORLD MARKET FOR ITS PRODUCTS – BATTERY CHARGERS. SUCCESS BOILS DOWN TO TWO FACTORS.

The first, obviously, is that the products are of high quality. The other is that CTEK adapts them to what the customers really need. This should be just as obvious, but is actually innovative.

CTEK is a battery company that develops, markets and sells products associated with battery technology – except for batteries themselves. Thus far, CTEK has been more or less synonymous with battery chargers. In its premiere year, 2001, CTEK sold chargers for SEK two million. Last year, the total was 120 million. The forecast for 2007 indicates SEK 165 million.

The world needs battery chargers. Modern batteries are more advanced and more sensitive than previous generations – and they are used more. They not only drive the starter motor, but also provide uninterrupted power to the electrical systems of today's vehicle.

The insight and business concept cemented themselves with Bengt Wahlqvist and Börje Maleus in the beginning of the 1990s when they started working with battery technology for battery manufacturer Optima. The two have been practically inseparable through the years – almost like twins (Börje is three weeks younger than Bengt) – since they were schoolmates at the Royal Institute of Technology in the beginning of the 1970s.

Up to the time Bengt started at CTEK at the end of the 1990s, battery chargers were an unwieldy and expensive product. They were difficult to use and required a lot of know-how to operate. Many used them with a sense of discomfort. But as batteries became more and more advanced, better charging systems and maintenance were needed. A new need blossomed. CTEK's challenge was to make battery chargers consumer friendly.

“That is the big innovation,” says Börje, who started at CTEK in 2001. “And setting a reasonable price for them. It takes a smarter construction with more appealing design and a faster and more cost-efficient route to end customers. For example, we turned down many wholesalers to keep consumer price down.”

In concrete terms, it comes down to technical details, such as pressing all of the chargers functions into a shell that is small enough to be carried in your pocket. It's about making it more versatile so that it can rapid-charge a drained battery and trickle charge motorcycle or motorboat batteries, for example, when stored for the winter. It's about making it safe – eliminating the risk of sparks or the risk of something breaking if you connect the terminals incorrectly or if the charger is exposed to rain.

CTEK is the first in the world to have some models equipped with a mode button to set, for example, silent night charging or reconditioning charging fully drained batteries. Otherwise, the whole point of consumer-friendliness is that all complex process are handled automatically. The latest models charge and trickle charge wholly automatically in eight steps.



“We figured out that charges do not need to be so incredibly powerful,” says Börje. “The biggest need is not rapid-charging a drained battery, it is preventing problems. Consumers also want easy-to-use gadgets.”

It was mostly by relying on intuition that Bengt and Börje were able to establish themselves as leading suppliers in many markets all over the world – from Scandinavia and Western Europe to Russia and Australia. Both now look forward to developing more products – equipping the chargers with additional functions and applications, developing products that maintain several types of electrical systems, such as instruments, and increasing performance.

In particular, CTEK is preparing for the enormous development of battery technology that is starting to take shape across the world, with politicians in particular increasing demands on car manufacturers to produce more efficient hybrid technology.

“I am completely convinced that all car manufacturers will offer hybrid cars by 2015,” says Bengt. “There is great power in the development of battery technology right now.”

For more information:

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